

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 DHA-02 ORM-02 /066 W

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R 120335Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8040

INFO AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0772

FOL MSG RECD ACTION BANGKOK FROM SONGKHLA 11 JAN IS REPEATED  
TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 008

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: RTG COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH

REF: SONGKHLA 003

SUMMARY: RTG SUPPRESSION EFFORTS IN THE SOUTH CONTINUE WITH  
AIR STRIKES NOW CONCENTRATED IN TRANG PROVINCE. RANKING OFFICIALS  
CONTINUE TO LAUD OPERATION WHICH APPARENTLY HAS SUCCEEDED IN  
FORCING INSURGENTS IN SOME AREAS TO DISPERSE. LIMITED GROUND  
TROOPS AVAILABLE TO FOLLOW UP AFTER AIR STRIKES COULD MAKE IT  
EASY FOR INSURGENTS TO RE-GROUP AFTER HEAT IS OFF. PLANS TO  
RESETTLE VILLAGERS FROM BAN THAD MOUNTAIN AREA ARE NOW WELL  
THOUGHT OUT AND COULD SPELL TROUBLE LATER ON. END SUMMARY.

1. AS STATED REFTTEL, SUPPRESSION OPERATION CONSISTS PRIMARILY  
OF PHASED AIR STRIKES IN AREAS WHERE INSURGENTS ARE THOUGHT TO BE  
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CONCENTRATED. STRIKES BEGAN IN SATUN AND SONGKHLA, MOVED TO PHAT-  
TALUNG, AND ARE NOW CONCENTRATED IN TRANG. NEXT PHASE IN SCHEDULED  
FOR NAKORN SRI THAMARAT AND SURAT. OFFICERS AT 5TH DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS SAY THAT GOUND OPERATIONS FOLLOWING AIR STRIKES HAVE  
RESULTED IN LIMITED CONTACT AND NO RPT NO RTA CASUALTIES. GROUND  
TROOPS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO REACH INSURGENT BASE AREAS APPROACHES  
TO WHICH ARE HEAVILY BOBBY TRAPPED. UNLESS THIS CHANGES, INSURGENTS

SHOULD EASILY BE ABLE TO RE-GROUP AFTER OPERATION ENDS.

2. TARGETS HAVE BEEN CPT CAMPS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SADAO DISTRICT IN SONGKHLA WHERE CPM (COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA) CAMPS HAVE BEEN HIT. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS AS WELL AS LOCAL RTA SOURCES INDICATE JOINT THAI-MALAYSIAN OPERATION IS BEING PLANNED AGAINST CPM IN SADAO. IF AS SOME REPORTS INDICATE, PLAN INVOLVES INTRODUCTION OF MALAYSIAN ARMY UNITS INTO SADAO SUCH A N OPERATION COULD BE SIGNIFICANT. UNDERSTANDABLY THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN RTA OVER WISDOM OF PERMITTING MALAYSIANS TO OPERATE IN SADAO. ONCE IN, THEY ARE APT TO BE VERY RELUCTANT TO LEAVE.

3. IN CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL JAN 10, SATUN GOV. ARI VONGARAYA SAID HE THOUGHT EARLIER AIR STRIKES IN SATUN HAD DRIVEN MOST INSURGENTS INTO TRANG AND PHATTALUNG WHERE THEY ORIGINALLY CAME FROM. HE INDICATED HOPE WAS TO DRIVE INSURGENTS BACK INTO TRADITION BASE AREAS WHERE THEY COULD BE CONTAINED AND THOUGHT THAT IN THE CASE OF SATUN THIS OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN ACHIEVED.

4. ONE ASPECT OF OPERATION WHICH DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE WELL THOUGHT OUT IS THE RE-SETTLEMENT OF VILLAGERS FROM THE BAN THAT MOUNTAIN RANGE. POLICE AND PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS WERE MEETING AFTERNOON OF JAN 10 IN SATUN TO DEVELOP PLAN TO RE-SETTLE SEVERAL HUNDRED VILLAGERS. GOV. ARI SAID THESE VILLAGERS CONSISTED PRIMARILY OF LOGGERS WORKING FOR SAW MILL AND FARMERS. LOGGERS PRESENTED LITTLE PROBLEM DESPITE OBJECTIONS OF SAW MILL OWNERS TO INTERRUPTION IN THEIR ACTIVITIES WHICH APT TO RESULT IN LOSS OF REVENUE. FARMERS PRESENT A PROBLEM AS RICE CROP IS NOW READY FOR HARVEST. LOSS OF CROP DUE TO FORCED RE-SETTLEMENT COULD GO LONG

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WAY TOWARDS SOURING VILLAGERS ON RTG. GOV. ARI SAID HARVEST COULD BE COMPLETED IN 15 DAYS BUT HE WAS NOT CERTAIN IF RE-SETTLEMENT WHICH WAS ORDERED BY FOURTH ARMY COMMANDER COULD BE POSTPONED. IN ADDITION, NO FIRM DECISION HAVE BEEN MADE ON WHERE VILLAGERS WILL BE RE-SETTLED OR WHAT ASSISTANCE RTG WILL PROVIDE THEM. THIS APPEARS TO BE AN AREA IN WHICH PRIOR COORDINATION BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS WAS INSUFFICIENT.

5. COMMENT: IF, AS APPEARS LIKELY, OPERATION CONTINUES TO CONSIST OF AIR STRIKES WITH MINIMAL MOVEMENT OF GROUND TROOPS INTO INSURGENT BASE AREAS, LONG TERM IMPACT APT TO BE SLIGHT. AT BEST INSURGENTS WILL BE FORCED INTO TRADITIONAL OPERATING AREAS FROM WHICH THEY FREQUENTLY EMERGED DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER TO HARASS RTG POSITIONS. THIS WOULD, HOWEVER, BE IN KEEPING WITH LONG STANDING RTG POLICY OF TRYING TO CONTAIN INSURGENCY WHILE AVOIDING CASUALTIES.

HAMILTON

UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

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